

VZCZCXRO6147  
OO RUEHGH  
DE RUEHUL #1905/01 3370824  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 030824Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6400  
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 9477  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//  
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0571  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7005  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 7064  
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 1560  
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5382  
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 4314  
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 7527  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1800  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3102  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2180  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 2786

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 SEOUL 001905

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [KS](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; December 3, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

-----

Chosun Ilbo

President Lee Instructs Officials Not to Yield to Rail Strikers'  
Demands and to Increase Alternative Workers  
Capable of Running Trains

JoongAng Ilbo

Child Sex Offenders May Face Up to 50 Years in Prison

Dong-a Ilbo

Obama's "Afghan Gamble"

Hankook Ilbo, All TVs

Damage Mounts as Railway Strike Continues

Hankyoreh Shinmun

President Lee's "Deviant View" of Labor Unions; He Denies Labor  
Unions' Right to Collective Action Guaranteed  
by Constitution

Segye Ilbo

Fair Trade Commission Fines Six LPG Providers  
668.9 Billion Won for Price-Fixing,  
the Largest Fine Ever Imposed Domestically

Seoul Shinmun

"Delicate Change" on Sejong City; Prime Minister Says,  
"We are Open to All Possibilities"

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

-----

Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, in a Dec. 2 forum, said that Seoul  
will not accept the peace treaty that North Korea is seeking solely  
with the U.S. to replace the armistice that ended the Korean War.  
(JoongAng)

The ROKG and the ruling Grand National Party (GNP) agreed yesterday  
to seek to send around 320 Korean troops to Afghanistan next July  
for a two-and-a-half-year mission. (JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankook,  
Segye, Seoul)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

---

President Barack Obama, in a Dec. 1 major speech, announced that he would send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan in coming months and start bringing American forces home in July 2011. (All)

## MEDIA ANALYSIS

---

### -President Obama's speech on Afghanistan

---

President Obama's speech on Afghanistan continued to capture the attention of the ROK media. The media offered mostly straightforward reporting on President Obama's decision to send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan in coming months and to start bringing American forces home in July 2011.

Coverage highlighted the President's statements: "I believe this argument (Afghanistan is another Vietnam) depends on a false reading of history. Unlike Vietnam, we are joined by a broad coalition of 43 nations that recognizes the legitimacy of our action;" and "It must be clear that Afghans will have to take responsibility for their security, and that America has no interest in fighting an endless war in Afghanistan."

SEOUL 00001905 002 OF 004

Newspapers carried the following headlines: "Obama's Gamble: 'Concluding Unpopular War in 18 Months'" (conservative Chosun Ilbo); "Obama's 'Afghan Gamble;' Obama Intends to End War One and a Half Years before Next Presidential Election... He Seems Aiming to Use Afghan Achievement for His Reelection" (conservative Dong-a Ilbo); and "Obama Plans Afghan Pullout in July 2011" (moderate Hankook Ilbo, left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun, conservative Segye Ilbo, moderate Seoul Shinmun)

Dong-a Ilbo editorialized: "Troop pullout without mopping up Taliban and al-Qaida remnants would endanger world peace and U.S. security. In that sense, it is natural that President Obama has decided to send additional troops to Afghanistan. ... During last month's visit to Seoul, President Obama hinted at the possibility that some USFK troops may be redeployed to Afghanistan. In order to prevent this from happening, creating a security vacuum, it is important for the ROK to provide assistance to Afghanistan."

(Ed. Note: In his Remarks to the Troops at Osan Air Base, Korea on November 19, 2009, the President thanked the troops for their individual personal sacrifices and service and said: "Many of you served in Iraq. ... Others among you served in Afghanistan. ... Others among you will deploy yet again." (Source: Whitehouse.gov.) There was no reference about pulling USFK troops off the Korean peninsula.)

Hankook Ilbo editorialized: "The deployment of additional troops, which will bring the total number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to over 100,000, can be seen as a dangerous gambit. If (this move) does not prevent the Taliban's expansion of power, the U.S. will lose justification for the war. However, the (U.S.) public is opposed to the troop increase. President Obama laid out a timeline for a troop pullout, but it is doubtful that the tide of war will turn in favor of the U.S. and its allies in just one and a half years. ... Observers say that the additional troop deployment has just turned 'Bush's war' into 'Obama's war.'"

An editorial in left-leaning Kyunghyang Shinmun argued: "We worry that this U.S. troop increase will result in the U.S. sinking deeper into the 'Afghan quagmire.' ... The U.S. has achieved little for eight years since it started the war shortly after the 9/11 terror attacks. ... The war has only inflicted huge losses without achieving Afghanistan's democratization or punishing (the Taliban.) ... President Obama also requested additional contributions from U.S. allies, including NATO countries, saying that the Afghan war is

an international issue. However, this will not be easy. The 'Obama's war' is highly likely to become the U.S.'s lonely war."

-N. Korea

-----  
Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo quoted Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan as saying in a Dec. 2 forum in Seoul that the ROKG will not accept the peace treaty that North Korea is seeking solely with the U.S. to replace the armistice that ended the Korean War. He was further quoted: "Our basic position is that any discussion on a peace deal must be centered on the two Koreas, with the U.S. and China also involved. ... North Korea talking about a peace deal seems intended to buy time and divert attention while it continues to develop nuclear weapons."

#### OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

-----

OBAMA TAKES GAMBLE WITH AFGHAN STRATEGY  
(Hankook Ilbo, December 3, 2009, Page 39)

U.S. President Obama announced a plan to send additional troops to Afghanistan to stabilize the situation there. The deployment of additional troops, which will bring the total number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to over 100,000, can be seen as a dangerous gambit. If (this move) does not prevent the Taliban's expansion of power, the U.S. will lose justification for the war. However, the (U.S.)

SEOUL 00001905 003 OF 004

public is opposed to the troop increase. President Obama laid out a timeline for a troop pullout, but it is doubtful that the tide of the war will turn in favor of the U.S. and its allies in just one and a half years.

In his speech, President Obama said, "We must reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government." Obama noted that his new Afghan strategy is to secure key population centers and partner with Afghan security forces. However, if history is any guide, it will be very hard for foreign forces to gain control of Afghanistan. Observers say that the additional troop deployment has just turned "Bush's war" into "Obama's war."

The ROKG, which is ready to dispatch its troops to Afghanistan, should look closely at the developments of the war and any changes in the situation (in Afghanistan) that may occur due to the U.S.'s new Afghan strategy.

WE CANNOT HAND AFGHANISTAN OVER TO TERRORISTS  
(Dong-a Ilbo, December 3, 2009, Page 39)

U.S. President Barack Obama said on December 1 that he had decided to "send an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan" and to "begin the transfer of our forces out of Afghanistan in July of 2011." In order to directly deliver his strong determination to win the war in Afghanistan to the people, President Obama announced the decision at his first address to the nation since his inauguration. He even "had his retreat cut off" by advancing a timeline for the troop pullout to a date much earlier than January of 2013, when his term in office expires.

The war in Afghanistan started when the U.S. military launched an air attack against Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, to punish al-Qaida and the Taliban, which protects al-Qaida, for the September 11 terrorist attacks. A U.S. troop pullout without mopping up Taliban and al-Qaida remnants would endanger world peace and U.S. security. In that sense, it is natural that President Obama has decided to send additional troops to Afghanistan.

To Afghan President Hamid Karzai, President Obama stressed, "The days of providing a blank check are over." He warned that the U.S. will stop providing largesse to an inefficient and corrupt Afghan government. In order to establish peace in the war-torn country, the Karzai Administration must first shape up.

Despite Washington's additional troop dispatch decision, the situation in Afghanistan is not getting better. The Taliban gave up an all-out attack and is harassing the U.S. and allied forces with guerilla warfare. The capital Kabul is so dangerous that, when ROK lawmakers visited the city as Presidential envoys last month, they were not able to stay at a hotel there. The Afghan people are tired of the prolonged war. In order to win a victory over the Taliban, both military operations against the militant group and civilian reconstruction operations should be mobilized. It is necessary to send combat troops at the same time that assistance in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and training of local self-defense forces is provided.

There are many areas in which our Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) can make contributions. In particular, the ROK's plan to train local police is desperately needed to ensure that Afghanistan stands on its own feet. The deployment of additional 30,000 troops is a heavy burden for the U.S. During last month's visit to Seoul, President Obama hinted at the possibility that some USFK troops may be redeployed to Afghanistan. In order to prevent this from happening, creating a security vacuum, it is important for the ROK to provide assistance to Afghanistan. (Ed. Note: In his Remarks to the Troops at Osan Air Base, Korea on November 19, 2009, the President thanked the troops for their individual personal sacrifices and service and said: "Many of you served in Iraq. ... Others among you served in Afghanistan. ... Others among you will deploy yet again." (Source: whitehouse.gov.) There was no reference about pulling USFK troops off the Korean peninsula.)

SEOUL 00001905 004 OF 004

U.S. SINKING DEEPER INTO AFGHAN QUAGMIRE  
(Kyunghyang Shinmun, December 3, Page 31)

In his first speech to the U.S. public on his plan for Afghanistan on December 1, President Obama announced that the U.S. will send an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan. The USG had been deeply considering whether to dispatch additional troops after Afghanistan Commander General Stanley McChrystal submitted a report requesting additional troop deployment in September. Still mindful that a considerable number of Americans are opposed to the U.S.'s increased military presence, Obama set a specific timeline, saying "After 18 months, our troops will begin to come home." It seems that he wants to quell concerns that Afghanistan may become a second Vietnam.

However, the prospects (that the troops will return on time) are very dim since it is unlikely that this timeline can be easily realized as President Obama and the U.S. public hope. We worry that this U.S. troop increase will result in the U.S. sinking deeper into the 'Afghan quagmire.' There are clear reasons that justify this concern. We need to ask two questions. What has the U.S. gained from this war? Why has the U.S. decided to increase its troop levels in Afghanistan?

The U.S. has achieved little for eight years since it started the war shortly after the 9/11 terror attacks. Osama Bin Laden is still alive. The Taliban was not routed from power but has strengthened its hold. Has Afghanistan achieved democracy? The answer is no. It seems that the U.S. is providing support to corrupt President Karzai. Over the duration of the war so far, the war has cost 1,532 lives of allies including 929 U.S. soldiers. The war has only inflicted huge losses without achieving Afghanistan's democratization or punishing (the Taliban.) Obama reminded us of the victims of the 9/11 terror attacks, stressing that the U.S. should reverse the tide of the war and that additional troop deployment is aimed at transferring responsibility to the Afghans. However, there is a slim chance that this will be realized. The Soviet Union collapsed after it lost the 10-year Afghan war.

President Obama also requested additional contributions from U.S. allies, including NATO countries, saying that the Afghan war is an international issue. However, this will not be easy. France made it clear that it will not increase its troop levels and Germany has expressed reluctance to dispatch additional troops. Immediately after the 9/11 terror attacks, people in the world proclaimed, "We

are all Americans," but now their attitude has changed drastically.  
'Obama's war' is highly likely to become the U.S.'s lonely war.

STEPHENS